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LAPSE OF TIME IN FAIRYLAND.

IN No. XXXI. (vol. viii., 1895, p. 334) attention was directed to the idea, found in the tales of European and Asiatic countries, that among supernatural beings time passes so rapidly that to a mortal three centuries appear only as three days. The collection of myths of the North Pacific coast, by Dr. Boas, supply several examples of a similar conception as held by American aborigines. The stories exhibiting the trait are not variants of a single narrative, although more or less connected. To the Newetsee belongs a legend which has a certain resemblance to the Voyage of Bran (pp. 191, 192). A young man who has harpooned a seal is drawn in his boat, together with a cousin, a great distance westward, passing by many lands, and encountering adventures, until he arrives at the home of a being who gives him his daughter in marriage, and who restores to life the deceased cousin, whose bones are brought up from the depths of the sea; the guest after a time feels a longing to return, and receives as a present a chest containing skins which has the property of being inexhaustible. When he reaches his native land the voyager finds that the house is mouldy and his father aged; in reality, the four days are four years (it will be seen, however, that a longer time seems implied in the condition of the dwelling). This version appears to have imperfectly preserved the conception more clearly indicated in variants of other tribes, setting forth that a wanderer has descended to the bottom of the sea, there dwelt with a monstrous but wise being, observed the dances and learned the charms which after his return he practises, and of which his descendants continue to make use; thus among the Tsimschians, the dancers in a certain family still array themselves in the marine decorations which their ancestor is said to have brought up from the deep.

A Comox tale (p. 87) containing the notion of the years taken for days, but otherwise apparently different, is that of a father whose daughter has been stolen, and who, going in quest, is informed by the dead people that she has been ravished by a youth of the wolf folk. Accordingly he resorts to the house of the wolves, where he is well received as a kinsman, he sees a stag captured, and thence he returns. So often as his posterity desire to take a stag, they pray to the wolves, whom they name sons-in-law. Whether any relation of derivation exists between the narratives of the New World and of the Old may be left to future investigation.

W. W. N.